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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000222

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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: PPRD NOMINATES KABILA FOR PRESIDENCY

REF: KINSHASA 210

11. (SBU) Summary: The People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) February 6 nominated President Joseph Kabila as its candidate for the DRC's presidential elections in 2006. During a disorganized party congress in Kinshasa, the PPRD lauded Kabila's efforts to bring peace and stability to the DRC, but failed to lay out a platform for continuing such progress after the elections. The congress was covered live on national television, in apparent violation of regulations. PPRD members did not vote on proposed candidate lists for legislative and provincial seats. The congress predictably also included several attacks on potential rivals for the presidency. Kabila himself, however, did not attend the party's proceedings and has yet not officially accepted the PPRD's nomination. End summary.

12. (U) The PPRD held its first party congress in Kinshasa February 6-8 and officially nominated current DRC President Joseph Kabila as its candidate for presidential elections in 2006. Kabila received the unanimous approval of the PPRD delegates (as did Vice Presidents Azarias Ruberwa and Jean-Pierre Bemba from their respective parties, the RCD and MLC). Kabila, however, did not attend his party congress (unlike Ruberwa and Bemba), is currently in Lubumbashi, and has not yet formally accepted the PPRD's nomination -- though is expected to do so. (Note: According to the DRC's constitution and draft electoral law, no member of the armed forces or police can run for political office. Kabila is still technically a general in the military and must resign his commission before officially declaring his candidacy. End note.)

13. (U) In his remarks to the congress, PPRD Secretary General Vital Kamerhe praised Kabila's record as president during the last three years, claiming Kabila had brought reconciliation and peace to the DRC. Kamerhe also said Kabila deserves to be President because he has paved the way for elections and a "renaissance" in the country.

14. (U) Vice President Abdoulaye Yerodia continued to praise Kabila, but also launched attacks on two potential political rivals. In thinly-veiled reference to presidential candidate Pierre Pay Pay, Yerodia said the PPRD would reveal the "criminal record" of a "certain Central Bank of Zaire Governor." Yerodia also ridiculed UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi and his decision to boycott elections, and accused

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"Ayatollah" Tshisekedi of issuing "fatwas" against the political system.

15. (SBU) In violation of regulations governing the equitable coverage of the country's political parties, the PPRD congress was carried live for four hours on February 6 by the government-owned television channel RTNC. (Note: RTNC did not broadcast the conventions of either the RCD or MLC, the PPRD's two main political rivals. End note.) The High Media Authority (HAM), which oversees the DRC's print and broadcast media outlets, on February 7 suspended for 48 hours RTNC's radio and television political reporting for this violation. RTNC officials and Kamerhe claim the PPRD paid RTNC to broadcast coverage of the party congress, though the suspension stands.

16. (SBU) Aside from the nomination of Kabila, no substantive decisions emerged from the congress. Only passing references were made to restoring economic prosperity and peace, and no larger party vision was presented during the conference. In addition, the PPRD did not vote to approve the lists of candidates for legislative and provincial elections. There were numerous reports that the reason party lists were not adopted is due to internal PPRD political strife and disagreement over the composition of the candidate lists.

17. (SBU) According to observers who attended the congress, the meeting was a largely disorganized affair. Observers said there was not sufficient seating for all the guests, including VIP delegates, nor was the air conditioning working.

18. (SBU) Comment: It was a foregone conclusion that Kabila would be the PPRD's unanimous presidential candidate, and little more than his nomination was accomplished at the congress. Though party members are maintaining the appearance

of a united front, there are clearly divisions as demonstrated by the inability of party members to agree on their candidates in the legislative and local elections that will take place at the same time as the presidential election. End comment.

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